POLICY

Sick Slips

This document is a policy of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan and reflects the position of the College.

Practising medicine involves much more than preventing, diagnosing and treating illness. Caring about the patients’ well-being are attributes of a physician.

Unfortunately, physicians regularly find themselves petitioned to write off-work slips and fill out long forms for a patient’s employer. This task is, most often, not enjoyable and consumes precious, free time.

When places of employment request information related to their employee’s illness, they are trusting that the physician will provide accurate, appropriate details concerning the employee’s absence. It is expected that the medical profession will be scientific in determining the contents of the Sick Slip.

Many times the doctor/patient relationship can be strained when a physician advises the employer and the patient disagrees with the physician’s opinion.

It is imperative that a physician is convinced of the facts around the illness, and conscientiously determines the proper period of disability.

Issuing a Sick Slip is a very important matter. Interested parties rely on our expertise in determining what is right or fair. The integrity of the medical profession is diminished when a note is completed without proper assessment. Ideally, a physician should be able to confirm the facts on the note if put under oath.

The following is a list of suggestions which should provide a balanced, common-sense approach to issuing Sick Slips:

1. Always assess the patient for true disability.

2. When possible, recommend appropriate alternative employment if not totally disabled.
3. Be convinced of the facts.

4. Be cautious in cases where the patient advises you what they think their time off should be.

5. Estimate a fair period of disability based on scientific grounds.

6. If you perceive that a patient disagrees with your assessment, have a frank, honest discussion with the patient prior to releasing the Sick Slip.

7. Never accept telephone information regarding an illness for the purpose of issuing a Sick Slip.

8. Be as objective as possible. Do not allow your friendship with the patient to lower your standards.

9. Signed Consent for Release of Information should be on the chart along with a copy of the Sick Slip.

10. When a patient comes in for a Sick Slip after the illness has ended, inform the employer that the patient advised the physician that they were ill, but was not examined for the illness.

In issuing a Sick Slip, a physician has been asked to provide an important service for the employer and this must be done in a credible fashion – always.